

In December of 2000, I left the Navy and returned to life as a civilian. I took a job at Ford, and worked reviewing brake systems.

About halfway through my time in Japan with the Navy, I had gone on a retreat, and from that retreat felt a strong call to study for the priesthood. But, that was two years ago, and that retreat seemed a million miles away ... and a hundred years ago.

I learned what was needed to become a priest, what was the schooling you needed, and tried to make sense of it. I went to night school for about two years; and then quit my job and went full time for four years. I ran out of money after two and a half years, and took a job running a dormitory at the university I was studying at.

As far as I could tell, I was doing everything right. Studying hard. Praying hard. But no matter how many times I would meet with vocation directors, I'd be told ... that I was awfully old to be a seminarian (I was in my early 40s) ... that I would have to re-take the classes I had taken over the last 5 years ... or that being ex-military wasn't a good fit ... or that my auto industry experience made me a bad fit for seminary.

I had done all that I could think of, and was having doors shut in my face left and right.

So, at the end of my first semester of graduate school – about 3 years into the whole thing ... I got down on me knees and told God:

“God, it's not working. I don't know what else to do. I don't want to talk to any more vocation directors. Send me a bishop. I'll finish the degree, but I'm putting you in charge of this vocation thing.”

Now, I was very independent and self-reliant. And I figured that what I had just done was an empty gesture. I continued working on finishing the degree, and was making plans to go on for more studies so I could become a professor.

When, about early October, three years ago ... my phone rang. It was Bishop Carlson. I had never met him. I had done virtually nothing to contact him. Pretty much, out of the blue, God had sent a bishop to help me move forward with this “vocation thing.”

You see, despite all my efforts to get into a seminary and be ordained, there was Someone else who wanted to give me everything. That someone was God. And God waited for me to ask Him and then He not only came through with what I asked for, but look at me ... three years later.

St. Paul tells us, “Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.”

For me, and I think maybe for a lot of us, we're very comfortable telling God our plans, and then we move forward with them. We kind of consider that prayer. We make plans, we ask God to bless those plans, and act as though He's some sort of imaginary friend.

But God is NOT our imaginary friend.

Saint Paul tells us to "make our requests known to God" ... "in everything."

Whatever you need. Whatever your desire. God wants to be there for you.

Jesus tells a parable about a vineyard. The owner put everything in place, and then leased it to tenants, and left them alone.

They wanted everything. They did worse than ignore his servants, they beat them up and killed them. When the owner sent his son, they even killed him.

Just like the tenants in the vineyard in the parable, I am convinced that every good thing we have comes from God. Let me say that again, every good thing we have comes from God.

And what we do with those things is up to us.

The tenants forgot who it was who owned the vineyard. Out of sight, out of mind as the saying goes. They took things into their own hands and tried to take control by force.

I have one very important thing to tell you: "God is in control, we aren't."

And since God is in control, the question is: "How far are we willing to go to prove to God that He isn't in control?"

"Make your requests known to God" ... "by prayer and petition" ... "in everything."

God desires to be part of each one of our lives. He has more good things to give us than we could ever think of.

What is missing is the part that depends on us. Do we ask? Are we willing to give it all over to God's control? Everything? Are we willing to "let go, and let God?"

Let us pray this week to know where in our lives we are still holding on to control. Let us ask for the grace to surrender control to the One who loves us beyond our wildest dreams. And in faith and in trust surrender our lives to God the Father, through Jesus His Son, and be prepared to receive the power of the Holy Spirit in abundance.